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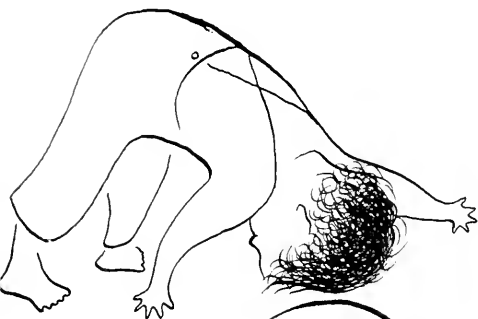






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# *a healthy personality for your child*



The Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, which met in Washington in December 1950, was a start toward a Nation-wide effort to deal with one of the most important problems of our time:

*How can we put to good use present knowledge about the ways human beings acquire the personal qualities essential to individual happiness and responsible citizenship?*

This is a problem that concerns everybody. It is not something that can be left to the doctors. It is the business of parents—but not of parents alone. Neighbors, teachers, policemen, radio and television performers, writers, and all the myriad number of people who touch the thinking, feeling, acting person help to shape his personality as he grows throughout childhood.

The Fact Finding Staff of the Conference had the job of putting together knowledge about how personality grows and what shapes it this way and that. This they did in their "Fact Finding Digest," which was given to Conference members as a kind of rehearsal for discussions that are continuing up and down the country.

This pamphlet, a popular version of part of that "Fact Finding Digest," was written by James L. Hymes, Jr., Ed. D., Professor of Education, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tenn.

Nobody is completely certain about the way personality gains health and strength. But many people—psychologists and psychiatrists, anthropologists and sociologists, physiologists and geneticists—have been studying children for many years. They have some practical ideas about what brings good results in building healthy personalities. Some of the conclusions they have arrived at are given here.

One point seems to be agreed on by all the people who study child growth and that is: Parents are the most important influence in their children's lives, but they are not to blame for everything that goes wrong. Everybody has a part to play in creating health of personality in children and youth—including children and youth themselves.

This pamphlet talks only about the part parents can have in helping their children achieve emotional and social health. Much could be written about the ways in which schools, churches, doctors and health workers, recreational and social services, and others touching the lives of children can help in this process. Much could be said, too, about conditions that make the rearing of children difficult for parents. But these are jobs for other books.

If you find this pamphlet helpful, you might be willing to share it with some other parents.

Martha M. Eliot

Martha M. Eliot, M. D.,  
Chief, Children's Bureau





# *a healthy personality for your child*

EVERY PARENT dreams a dream for his child. This is one of the exciting things about America. We can dare to hope.

Not that we all want a future President in our family. But we do dream that our children will have good friends, a pleasant home, an interesting job. . . . Democracy's dream is that all children have this.

Sometimes dreams of cash or health or jobs crack up, and no one is to blame. There is one dream you can have, however. One dream that you can surely help come true: ***That your child shall have a healthy personality.***

Not personality of the skin-deep kind: bright teeth, nice hair, big smile . . . the kind of personality you see on the billboards and in the movies. You can help your child build something deeper than that. You can help him build his personality inside of himself—how he feels; the kind of person he is; the way he acts; the kind of thoughts he has. You can help him build his whole being.

This is his personality ***inside***: his easiness and comfortableness, his contentment and sureness and peacefulness. You can help build the good feelings that he will need be he rich or poor, President or John Q. Citizen, doctor,

lawyer, merchant, chief. You can help your child become a happy and strong-feeling person—a person who can see clearly and be realistic in his approach not only to his own problems but to the larger issues that affect every human being. He must be able to take his place as a citizen of his own country and as a citizen of the world.

This healthy personality is inside. It shows outside too. When it is in your youngster, his inner peace breaks through. You spot it in all he does: in the good way he works with other people, in the clear way he gets at problems, in the able way he takes what life brings, in the way he is able to put into practice his spiritual beliefs and ideals.

This healthy personality is inside and outside and all around. For this is the person. And you, parents, have a large hand in helping him to grow.

## *A big dream*

If you want this for your child the time to start is now, whatever his age. At the very beginning of your youngster's life, if your child has just been born. On his sixth or his tenth or his fourteenth birthday, if that is today.

## *But now*

You work at it day by day, day after day, every day through all the little things that you do and don't do.

This sounds like a big job but it adds up to simply living with your child, to caring for him, to trying to see that he gets what he needs for his good life : : : when he is new-born, 1 year old and 6 and 9 and 14.

It is a simple everyday business *and* your youngster is in the business every bit as much as you are.

## *He does the work*

This healthy personality—or call it real inner happiness—is something he wants for himself. His whole human nature pushes him toward it. He is really the one who does the work.

He will always be seeking out what he wants and needs. He will always be trying to let you and the whole world know when there is something that matters very much to him. Humans are made so that we all try to get, one way or the other, what we need to live. That means that your child plays the really active part.

You go along with your youngster. You help him in his efforts. You smooth the road.

This is all-important. Your youngster does not stand much chance of success unless you do your share. But your share is this special kind of "work": helper, friend, supporter, guide. You know that the youngster has to live his own life. *He* is the one who has the wants and urges inside of him. You side with him. You believe in him. You back him up in what he is after.

## *No words*

One thing makes it hard: a child often has trouble putting what he wants into words. He rarely uses words, in fact, for what we are talking about here.

Children do say: "I want a bike . . . I want

a book . . . I want a ball . . . ." They will say this day after day from the time they can talk. Sometimes you answer "Yes" and sometimes you answer "No." But all these nameable, touchable, buyable, holdables do not mean as much to a youngster as we sometimes think . . . or as he sometimes wants us to think. You can say "Yes" or "No" to them and it does not matter very much.

But there are other wants deep down inside of him. There are other desires that go all through his being. There are needs so spread out in all of him that he can't find the words to sum them up.

He has a way of telling, though. He uses his whole body, all of him, all of his behavior, everything, to let you know. You won't mistake his signs.

His eagerness and persistence and his continuous searching will tell you; that is one way you will know.

His great peace and contentment when he has what he needs will tell you; that is another way you will know.

His restlessness when he is not getting what he needs is a sign; that is still another way.

He wants these good things of human life so much that he searches until he gets them, he is at one with the world when he has them, he is at odds with the world when he does not. That is the way human beings are made.

Your part is to read the signs your child's behavior gives you, to believe the signs when you see them, to grease the ways in the direction they point.

## *Change . . . Change . . . Change*

You will find saying "Yes" comes easy if you have confidence it won't keep your child from growing up.

Youngsters do not want to stay small, no matter how pleasant being a baby may seem. They do not go on wanting the satisfactions a baby gets, no matter how nice babyish things may be. Your child—and every boy and girl—is made with springs inside of him, a motor, a force that pushes him on.



Growth is the normal thing. Growth is the healthy thing. Growth is what a child wants for himself. Not just growth in size. Growth in what he can do. Growth in how he can do it.

If you read your child's signs rightly. . . .

If you grease the ways so that he gets what he needs. . . .

You free him to grow, and that is what a child wants for himself. He wants to keep moving on and on and on in his development. That is the way he becomes himself: An infant today but a walking-running child tomorrow; a play-child today but a work-child tomorrow; a child today but a young adult tomorrow.

You need never fear that if you help your child get what is important to him he will stay stuck. Work with him so that he gets the growth-essentials that he needs and wants at each stage in his growing up; that is your big job.

## *Timing*

Good timing is the key to the healthy personality. There is one time above all when a youngster can make the greatest use of each growth essential.

When the timing is off in our grown-up world, we sometimes say: "I need that like I need a hole in my head."

You have a newborn and fond relatives present you with a play pen. What you need

are dozens of extra diapers.

You have a 3-year-old and someone presents you with a precious encyclopedia. What you need are some old magazines your child can tear up.

The big trick is to hit the moment right, *Now* . . . when the time is ripe. But sometimes the time is *too soon*, sometimes the time is *too late*.

Your 2-year-old gets a rattle; he is well past that stage. Your 6-year-old gets a tricycle; he wants a bike now. Your 10-year-old gets an indoor baseball; he has his heart set on a real ball.

The right thing at the right time, and it is put to use. A good thing when the time is not ripe, and it must sit on the shelf. The one builds; the other waits.

A child needs certain satisfactions in his growing up when he needs them most. If he gets them he is made stronger. He puts them to work inside of himself. He is more of a person for having them and for using them. He builds on them because they are what he needs at the moment, and he is stronger for the tomorrow.

Let us start at the beginning now and look at children. Let us see how all this works out: The one big hunger each child has most of all at each stage in his growing; how he lets us know; how we can smooth the road so that he gets what he needs.

# *that sure feeling:* everything is O. K.!

What is it that infants seek? What gives the baby the strength he must have to go ahead and grow?

You could guess it, even if no one ever wrote it out: *A feeling that his world is O. K., a sense of trust from being in it!*

We adults want exactly the same thing when we are in a new spot. What would you do, for example, if you had to walk on a board that went across a stream? You would make sure that the plank would hold you. You would step on it gingerly to see if it would take your weight.

What do you do when you go swimming at a new lake? Or skate on ice the first time in the winter? You test it out first, and then you feel sure.

The infant is doing exactly this, but his job is bigger than any we face. For him everything is new. Not simply one new part in a whole with all the rest familiar and known, but "the world." Everything needs testing before he can feel sure.

What are people like? Can he count on them? Are they reliable and friendly and nice?

What is the world like? Is it kind or does he have to fight it? Is it decent or does he have to be careful, on his guard, watching it every minute? Is it a safe place or are there nasty surprises that sneak up?

He even has to find out for sure about himself. He, too, is new to him. He cannot even be certain what he can do. Will his body serve him? Will it do what he wants it to? Is it faithful and reliable, or tricky so that he always has to be on the lookout?

We all do this same kind of wondering when

things are new. The infant does not think it out. He certainly does not say it. But this is his great concern.

Just like the rest of us, if he can feel that the *New* is trustworthy (and for him the *New* means everything: People, things, events, himself!), then he can relax. He can give his energy to growing. He does not have to be jittery—either fighting all the time (because this world is an enemy) or frightened all the time (because he cannot trust the world).

## *It happens easily*

This sure feeling is the rock bottom on which later life is based. Luckily, it comes easily to most children.

You bring the feeling to them through all the simple things you do when they are infants: Your warm holding when you nurse them; the friendly loving way you talk to them; your willingness to comfort them when they cry, to change them when they are wet, to fondle them when they want some company.

Your love carries this sure feeling—"Everything is O. K.!"—inside to their bones. You don't have to make any special point of it. All the kindly attentions that are so easy to give to babies bear the message.

Your smiles tell it to the child and the little songs you sing; your laughter and your appreciation; your not being harsh or stern or shouting. If you let yourself show the love you feel, your youngster will get what he is wanting.

He will get it, too, when you let him do things



for himself: The reaching out for toys, the trying to crawl, the first standing up . . . the chances a child seeks to test himself out. They tell him that his body is a friend, too.

### *Never over and done with*

This hunger for a sense of trust—of sureness and of safety—*is* Infancy. But it goes on through all of life. Even when they have had a good full share of it, children keep coming back at times. In infancy they are concerned with trust all the while, in everything they do and in everything that happens to them. As they get older, this becomes more “once in awhile.” Children are more apt to want it when something is new, when something is strange, when something is different.

As long as they go on growing, children are going to need some of this from us: Assurance, a pat on the back, comfort, a helping hand over

the new high hurdle. All children will need it now and then. Some will need it more than others. You cannot measure it out in even doses. Nor can you sit like a judge on high: “You have had enough. You should not want any more.”

Each child will tell his needs himself. If you have any doubts, remember: A youngster cannot feel strong with an empty spot inside.

No matter how old your child is now, support him when he wants you to. Comfort him, when he wants you to. Stand by him, when he wants you near. When he asks for your helping hand, accept the fact that he does and give it to him. This will not make him soft; it will give him the courage to grow.

When he is an infant and cries, you hold him. When he is sad, you comfort him. His crying tells you that he wants some loving; his relaxation and happiness and peace tell you that you are right when you give it to him. The infant who senses fully that this is a friendly supporting world moves on to the next stage in his growth.

# *that strong feeling: I-I-I*

What is that next stage? Most youngsters usually enter it somewhere around the beginning of their second year. If you stop for a minute, you will probably be able to tell what matters most of all to children of this age.

They are wonderful crawlers. Many of them can stand up by themselves. Some can walk and really get about. Their hands are useful tools to them now; they can get what they want. And they are beginning to talk and to have real words. What would matter to a person like this?

Do you remember when you bought your new car? You wanted to take it out to the straight level stretch, step on the gas and see what it could do.

So do these youngsters who are turning Two. They have themselves. They want to use themselves . . . wide open, for all they have, on the flat open stretch.

What matters? To be big. To be strong. To have power. To be a person. To be real. For awhile now in their growing up the thing that matters most is to be themselves . . . and they pound away at it.

But it is all built on Trust.

A youngster would not dare sound off the way this age does unless his earlier life had taught him: People are friendly, the world is friendly, "I am O. K." His sure feeling that everything is trustworthy gives him the courage to go overboard the way he does. This phase of living grows out of the first. In turn, even though these years are sometimes hard on adults, this phase contributes to what lies ahead.

## *Watch your nerves*

You can say that these youngsters want to throw their weight around. They want to but-

ton their own buttons and to feed themselves. They want to pour their own milk and get on the potty and off again all by themselves. They want the chance to say "No" . . . and they will say it to you: When you call them, when it is time for meals, for bedtime, for coming and going.

They will IF they have had a good sure sense of trust built inside of them. In turn, as they grow, they will use this good, strong, firm feeling of I—I—I that these years give them for other good purposes.

But right now, they simply want to test their wings. To climb where they want to climb, to touch what they want to touch, to do what they want to do, to come when they want to come.

This is what these years add up to: Be Yourself, Find Yourself, and then you have You. Never again does the child have to pound away with quite the same intensity. This is the special purpose of these years and it is a good one.

But these years are not easy to live with. It was simpler to be loving to the wee one in his crib and bath. Now your youngster is changed. He does not want your loving hands around him; he wants the freedom to go.

Yet he still does want your love. You show it now most of all by giving him his freedom, but you also show it by holding him close when he is hurt or troubled or when he wants you near. He calls the signals; you follow him.

## *A sensible "No"*

You show your love, too, by setting some limits. Freedom—the I—I—I—is what matters but too much freedom, where anything goes, is hard on a child. If you never say "No," strangely your youngster does not get what he basically wants.



He finds himself—and that is what he is after—in part by bumping up against some of your “No’s.” They give him an area he can operate in. If he has the whole wide world, life is much too big. Instead of venturing forth, he may shrink back. Or he may insist, demand, refuse all the more. Either way, he has a frightened feeling inside.

The sensible “No” is hard to give. This age traps us. They go so far in asserting themselves that sometimes, when we finally say “No,” we are mad. We say it harder than we mean to. Our stormy voice and stormy face make the youngster feel bad . . . confused and worried inside. He senses that he has gone too far. (Maybe we won’t like him now; maybe the world is not as safe and sure as he thought it was.) His courage to find himself seeps away . . . but he *has* to find himself in these years.

You have to somehow find a balance between comfort and freedom, a balance between freedom and some reasonable limits.

*But children have health built in them*

The big saving grace is that you do not have to be perfect, at this age or any other. ***If only angels could raise good children, none of us would be parents.*** Probably no one hits the balance mark perfectly, but then no one has to. Youngsters sense your good will when you try. That plus their own sturdiness carries them on in their growth.

Just so long as you know: These years are the time when the child stamps out his mark for himself. That is their special purpose in his life. Know this and you will find it easier to give this age what it needs so it can go to town. ***The tools:*** Spoons, forks, buttons, beds, pitchers, clothes they can manage. . . . ***The chance to play:*** The paints, water, sand, blocks, dolls they can use their own way. . . . ***The people:*** Not too bothered, not too angry, not too upset when these youngsters have their say.

Just so long as you know: The child cannot really find himself unless you set some limits, reasonable ones that make good sense; limits that you impose with gentleness and kindness and understanding. Be yourself and draw the line when you feel you have to. Make it a generous line but make it your own. Draw it when you feel you must. Keep yourself from becoming so upset that you forget your youngster will keep on growing.

### *The next station stop*

Because grow he will. Just as he did not stay an infant.

Once he finds that he is real, once he gets the full rich sense that he is a person (and what a person he is!), he is going to ease up. It is good that he discovers himself when he is little. Two- and three-year-olds may be a little hard to live with, but the adult who has never found himself is much harder to take.

You must know adults like that: People who



still have to throw their weight around, who always have to be right. Or you must know people just the opposite: The "Milquetoasts" who dare not speak their mind, grown people who are afraid to assert themselves.

But a youngster who has been given a chance to throw his weight around, who has used himself and tested himself just for the sake of doing it, is ready now to settle down. Now he is ready to take his Self, the Self he knows is real, and put it to some more directed uses.

You cannot say that this new development begins at a certain minute and ends on another. But out of the strong urge to feel himself an independent person, the I—I—I that is year 1 and year 2 and 3, there develops a finer use of Self. It grows best through the years of 3, 4, and 5.

*BUT*

*HOLD*

*ON*

*NOW . . .*

Before we follow this development in years 3, 4, and 5, let us stop a moment. What you

have read so far tells you what all youngsters want at the start of their life: That sure feeling that everything is O. K. and that strong feeling of I—I—I.

It tells you how all youngsters want to grow up; how on their own they move along if they get what they need; how growth is their idea.

This gets us started on the human story of each child's search for a healthy personality, and how we can work along with him.

But into this story of humans—of boys and girls, of children (and of adults)—you have to fit that very special person, your own child.

### *Spotlight on your youngster*

All youngsters have needs that are much alike. All grow in the same direction. But each child is himself and grows in his own way.

If you have more than one child, no one knows this better than you. But all of us continually have to sharpen our knowledge that each youngster is himself. Whenever we forget just a little, children do not get the full measure of the things they need for growth.

As you live with your child, from the moment he is born, you will begin to see his very special self. He will put his trade mark on the way he does things. That special way, if you keep looking, will sink into you as "his stamp."

Some youngsters are born more active and energetic than others. They go after what they want—the nipple, for example, when they are babies—with great gusto and pep and drive. Other children, just as good, have a quieter and more waiting-way as their personal approach.

Some children are born able to feel life much more keenly: Sounds, sights, pain, beauty, joy, disappointments. . . . Their whole surface is more sensitive. The world hits them harder with a fuller, richer, rawer touch.

Some children are born with special areas of keenness: Sound for one, rhythm for another, beauty for a third. And some youngsters—just as human, fully as worthy, equally as full of promise—do not get their impressions with such a full smacking force.

Some children have their special areas for being more easily hurt: Foods that do not agree, skin diseases that always hit them, eyes that water with every cold, a throat that always goes hoarse. . . .

As we watch our youngsters each of us could add to this list of personal and private ways that make each child himself. One child from birth is a fast-grower. His teeth come early, he walks ahead of the rest, he talks more quickly. Another, just as bright, is on a slower time table. One child is a more even grower; another spurts and jumps ahead and then seems to stand still to catch his breath awhile.

One child is born more alert and bright and able to pick up ideas quickly; he is a smart child, we say. Another is perhaps more nearly like the rest of us and still another is a little slow. One child is not so fast with ideas and words but he is good on seeing things in his mind's eye, and still another is really smart in working with his hands.

And your child is different still.

Every youngster is himself. That is the way we must preserve him. He has to feel liked

and respected and honored and accepted just as he is. When children try to fit themselves into someone else's shoes or clothes or dream, they are hurt. This is a tiring, defeating, exhausting way to live. No good comes of it.

If a youngster is to be strong, he must first feel strong inside himself. He must feel that there is a good place for him in this world, just as he is. He must know that he is fine for his family, his friends, his world of children and school and job, just as he is.

This is where a fellow needs a friend. Unless there is a friend nearby, the world's demands can hit a child's weaknesses too much and make him feel no good. Unless there is a friend close at hand, the world can miss his strengths and he feels flat and useless.

Be that good friend to your children.

### *See him as he is*

Your particular child, for example, may be the kind who is more full of feeling than most. (He is not weaker for it, but better off actually.) In infancy he may need more comfort and signs of sureness than other children do. He may need more proof of safety in his later years.

In the span of years that follow infancy, he may take your "No's" more to heart and tend to draw back to play it safe. You may have to adjust to his private nature by soft-pedaling your demands.

Maybe your child is one who has an especially strong will of his own. In years 2 and 3, when all children are bringing up their big guns, he smashes against every obstacle with extra force. Or your child may be the very active kind, always on the go. In these same years his energy runs him into more "No's" than many another child. For youngsters like these you have to hold the reins lightly.

At every stage in his growing up, stop, look, and listen for your child's inborn ways. Be prepared to tip the scale so life is good for him as he is.



*See him as he has lived, too*

Children are born different and they are made different by what has happened to them. Perhaps your baby was sick a lot when he was an infant. That can water down a youngster's sense of confidence. Or when he was little maybe you were sick or had a job and that left you little time for him. Or—still another possibility—perhaps you did what looked like the right thing to you at the time: You let him cry or you did not play with him or you did not pick him up. Youngsters like these may want more comfort than other children will at ages 4 or 6 or 9.

Perhaps the way you lived made it hard for your child to get his full sense of I—I—I. Crowded quarters can sometimes do this; too many "old folks" around; a new baby, so you had not time to let your older one do things for himself. Such a child may still be bombarding you at ages 5 or 10 or 14.

There is no point in looking back. No one can ever do more than he is able to do, and no one can re-do the past. But you can look at your child now. You can give him what he needs right now. You can make his present living good.

*NOW*

*LET'S*

*GO*

*ON . . .*

With your own youngster in the picture, with his special ways clearly in mind, let us look now at the next step in growing up, these years of 3 and 4 and 5.





# *that more clean-cut feeling:* my plans and ideas

These years are less of fire-at-will. Less of wild self-asserting. What youngsters want now is to smooth those rough edges and to get themselves down to work.

What are they after in this settling down? A sense of initiative, a sense of being someone who has an idea and who carries it out. A sense that this real person they have just discovered can go to work in a more definite way. This is the time for plans and ideas.

They are not always pretty plans and ideas. This is the age that can get into the furniture polish and smear it all over the rug. This is the age that can puncture holes in the screens, but in such a nice design. This is the age that wakes up before you do and decides that this is the day for scrambled eggs . . . and scrambles them all over the kitchen.

But there is a settling down. Even in these irritating performances you sense their trying to *do something*.

This is the reason that this age hangs around you. Their eyes are on you; they want to know how grown-ups act and what real jobs are like.

This is onereason for the endless questions they ask (and how they can ask them all the time!). Questioning you. Questioning the milkman, workmen, plumbers and electricians . . . everyone who comes into the house. Questioning people in stores and on the street and wherever they find them. Questioning everybody, with words and even more with their eyes and ears: What do people do? I'm a person now.

You see it in their play, for this is the great age of make-believe. "You must be the daddy and I must be the mommy. . . . You must be sick and I must be the doctor. . . . You

must be working and I must bring in the eggs." They are like real grown-ups in their play, and that is what this age is good for.

## *A trial run*

These years are a trial run. Youngsters begin to see what they can do . . . not in the hit-or-miss way of the earlier years but in a more refined way now.

They don't always sound refined. As you hear them there can be a lot of name-calling: "You stinker. . . ." A lot of brassiness: "I hate you . . . I hate milk . . . I hate vegetables. . . ." A lot of boasting, a lot of threatening, a lot of toughness.

But all in words. This age *says* them. This is the tongue talking and not the whole body. There is less of tough action, less of tough doing, less of tough behavior. The siege guns are mostly verbal, and that *is* a real refinement over throwing your whole weight around and your whole body and all of you.

Once you get used to the noise, this age is not too hard to live with. Sometimes we do not even take it seriously enough. These years do not get under our skin. We are more apt to brush them off like a pesky mosquito.

When you look at what these children do most of the time it is "just play." It looks as though nothing real is going on. But looks can fool you. This is very earnest, very real.

The youngster who gets the time to ask his questions, to see life going on, to play with a lot of make-believe, stands a good chance of de-

veloping an ability that we like. He stands a good chance of becoming a real person with real ideas. The kind of person who speaks up and stands ready to carry out his ideas.

## *Stuck*

A youngster may pull in his horns. . . .

If he is rushed all the time: "We can't wait for you just to play. Now come right along. . . ."

If he is interfered with too much: "You are just being silly. You are too old for that. . . ."

If he is pulled down to earth before he is ready to come: "Clean up that mess. You will just get dirty. . . ."

A youngster may hesitate to be himself. He may feel that he should not say his ideas and make his plans. He will have other chances as his life goes along to develop this up-and-at-them initiative. But this is his first real chance.

If the youngster is landed on too hard when he tries something out: "You scribble on my magazine once more and I'll. . . ."

If what he does is made to look silly: "Do you call that a painting? How am I supposed to look at it? Is it upside down, or doesn't it make any difference?"

A child can crawl into his shell, and you don't want that.

## *And your youngster?*

This is the time to try things out. Your child in his particular self may be quieter than some. He may need more encouragement. Give it to him. He may need to see more so he gets more ideas. Let him see. Whatever he is like he needs materials to work with—not gadgets he winds or shoves, not those he sits and looks at—but materials *he* can work with. Give him the wood and the nails and the hammer; give him the blocks and the cars and the boats; give him the paint and the clay; give him the chance to dress up and parade around.

It is not what he makes that counts (it won't look like much) but how he feels. It is not what it looks like outside but what he feels like inside.

Your youngster, on the other hand, may be running over with ideas. Your problem may be to catch up with him and to keep up with him and to save the pieces. Don't squelch too hard when you do catch up. Furniture, walls, things can be repaired but if your child lives these years for what they are really worth, he has added to himself. He is more ready to go on growing.



# *that feeling of importance:*

# I can do

When he has come along far enough you will see a new concern appearing. It flowers out of the old, like the blossom from the bud.

This new concern is just what you would expect: a real sense of industry. Now the wheels are humming. You begin to see the busyness of the bee; a doing in real life now of This Person and These Ideas that he has been trying out in play. Because he wants it for himself, your child will grow into the search for that sense of importance, the good feeling a child gets when he knows: I can do.

Your youngster is now about six. A long span of school years lies ahead of him. These years count. They are important in themselves. If your child's early years of life have been good ones, it will be hard for him to miss in these years that now lie ahead.

## *Success*

These are the years when it matters so much to youngsters to get good at something. They want to have the wonderful sense inside of them that they are skilled; that they can produce; that they are able.

You have seen this best in children on the street. You have watched them working hard to get good at riding a bike or roller skating or playing with a yo-yo or with jacks, at throwing a ball, or shooting a gun. Their effort tells you, plain as words, how much it means to this age to succeed.

This is most of all a school age, however. School can be a wonderful place to learn these fine feelings of accomplishment. When a child

really discovers how to read, how to add, to spell, to write, he gets a sense that he is somebody. These are good skills and youngsters want them.

This concern with real skills does not blossom overnight, of course. And some youngsters are trapped because it does not. Children have to be ready to be able to get the school skills. Not all youngsters have done the growing by the time they are six that these skills call for—not even all smart children and certainly not all normal children.

This inside-of-the-child growth is not something a youngster can control. It means growth of muscles and organs and of the nervous system. No boy or girl can wish or work or worry them into faster growing.

If your child happens to be a fast-grower, he is lucky. But if a youngster can't keep up the pace, life now can be hard on him. It is really tough if a school expects a child to be ready and won't pass him when he is not. The school not only picks on him for something that is not his fault. It also robs him of accomplishment at the very time when that means so much to a child. It is a bad feeling to start this whole span of your life with the sense that you are not good at things.

If your child is having trouble at the start of school, don't blame him. Buck him up. Do other things with him where he can succeed. It is hard enough on youngsters inside when they have not yet found themselves. Worry and nagging and punishments and failure everywhere make life that much harder.

They can weaken a child's resolve to keep working to get good at things. They don't



strengthen it. They can force a youngster into attack or retreat, instead of fitting in with all the rest of us.

### *Danger ahead*

Slow-growing children face this danger. We have to shield them from it. But even fast-growing youngsters run a risk, depending on the home and neighborhood they come from.

It is easier for a child to fall into the school skills if his home is a reading home where people have their noses buried in a book. It is easier if his home is one where people talk a lot and speak carefully, because reading is based so much on hearing good speech. It is easier if he has traveled a little—around the town and over the top of the hill.

Still other youngsters can have two strikes against them. The child who has a hearing loss or the one who has some difficulty seeing will find the going rough. Children who have not played much with others or youngsters who have had an upsetting life before school may also run into difficulties. Children who feel they are different from other youngsters, whose skin is a different color or whose names are hard to pronounce are at a disadvantage, too.

Good schools try to take all of this into account. They try to make their program a big broad one where every child can succeed, no matter what he is like and no matter what his background. Youngsters who are ready to learn to read, read. But good schools do not hold children back because they can't read. They find out what each child is ready for. It may be better language or work with tools or

how to live with other children. But each child learns something and each succeeds and each goes right on growing.

*BUT*

*HOLD*

*ON*

*NOW . . .*

You want this kind of a school for your child, a school that likes him and that takes him as he is. You want a school for him that will let him know without any doubt: I am good and I can do.

But what about *all* children?

There is a child right now—not your own—who is not getting a solid feeling of accomplishment. Maybe his classroom has too many children in it. Maybe his teacher is not paid enough or did not have enough training. Maybe she believes too much in failure. This is not your child but he is in your youngster's generation.

He may move and live next to your youngster. He may work beside him in the years to come. He will vote with your child in the same elections. For better or worse, he is in your youngster's world.

But this child—it makes no difference where he lives now—is not becoming a sturdy youngster. He is turning his back on work and on standards and on what people expect. This child—somewhere—is selling himself on the idea that he is no good anyhow. So he lives up to that idea.

*For the sake of our children*

Each one of us thinks first of our own children. We each want the best for our youngsters.

That is natural enough. But our child will not grow up to live in a world all alone. His safety, his welfare, his happiness depend in large part on the well-being of all of the other children who are growing up to be his fellow-citizens.

Somehow, to be good parents, we have to want and to work for the best for our children. But we have to want and to work for the best for all children everywhere, too. Decency demands this. But we must for the sake of our own children, too.

This means that we all have a special stake in good schools for all youngsters but we also have to be concerned about good homes, good clubs, good camps, good groups, good streets, good neighborhoods . . . for our children and for all boys and girls. If a child is pushed out completely, if his home or neighborhood or school is so empty that there is nothing the youngster feels he can do (one child put it: "I haven't anything to be proud of"), then difficulties may set in. A youngster may turn his back on the laws of the family or town that have let him down. He may withdraw into himself.

The child must believe in himself. There is no getting away from that. If he cannot do it in a good way, he will do it in a bad way. But do it he must. And your child has to grow up in the world with him.

*Earlier, later, and everywhere*

It is not only with this age that we must feel a wide concern, nor is it with schools alone. Some youngsters live in housing and under conditions of poverty, in families full of strain. It is hard for such children to build a full sense of trust. Some youngsters have a skin color or a religious belief or a name or live in a neighborhood, or have family customs that make it hard for them to get the full decent feeling of I—I—I and to feel free to say out their ideas. These children will rub elbows with your child at some point; then your youngster may be the one who is hurt.



Let us look again at how we can help our own children—and how all children—get *that feeling of importance: I Can Do.*

### *Snakes, worms, and beetles*

Many children get their big boosts on the street and in the playing fields. This is one place where their real sense of know-how grows.

As always with children's play, we sometimes get impatient. We get most disturbed when the play takes over the house, too. This is the age when some youngsters keep snakes and others breed worms; when some think white mice are the best animals in the world and others cut out every picture of a horse that they can find.

This adds up to mess and confusion and clutter. It gets on our nerves and we have an urge to sweep it all out and tidy up. This urge can be particularly strong when youngsters collect and then leave their things about. We say: "If they really cared about . . . (it may be their horse pictures or baseball stars or racing cars or planes)."

But children do care. They may not seem to at times but these hobbies and collections and enthusiasms are their way of giving themselves something that the other fellow does not have. They are specialists. And in being specialists—knowing a little bit more, talking sometimes too much for what they know—they build themselves up. We all have a great stake in that.

Your home may be a good, steady, nice, and safe one. Your income may be enough so that your family need not be harried by worry. Your beliefs, your customs, your color, and your name may be ones that most people like. Like his own inborn nature, these factors also determine whether it will be simple for a youngster to get the things he needs for growing, or whether the cards will be stacked to make the job too hard.

Every parent works first of all with his child directly but we all have to see this other part to our job, too: That every youngster everywhere has the chance to get what he needs for growing.

*NOW*

*LET'S*

*GO*

*ON. . .*

### *A tricky age*

This age can get out of balance. If a youngster has had a good start to his life, the chances are that he will come through it fine. But if he started not too sure of himself, this age can throw him.

As the span nears its end, these boys and girls build an immense loyalty to each other. They do not seem, on the surface, to care much

for grown-ups' rules and regulations. Often they appear more sloppy, tardy, careless and "fresh" than they had been before. This can be a great let-down for you. The children seem to get worse instead of better.

But, balancing this, these youngsters are fans for their pals' laws and rules. Not for all the world will they go back on what their own little gang says is right. You see under-obedience toward us; over-obedience toward their friends. It is a strange picture.

The children who find success in these years come back into balance. Their great loyalty to their own age serves a useful purpose for them. It becomes a practice time in law-abiding, in conforming, in fitting in. Families and schools and society get the benefit later on of the practice they have had.

The children who drift along, never knowing inside of them this important sense of industry, this sense of accomplishment, this sense of being skilled and informed, do not come back. Their gang loyalty, which otherwise could be so healthy, stays put. It never becomes a spring-board for the bounce back to accepting rules. These youngsters are apt to stay where they are—chip on the shoulder, rule-breaking, anti-adult—even as they get older.

A feeling that there is something one is good at is the answer. A feeling of self-respect gives self-confidence: preparation for the next step.

If the youngster gets success, he grows. If school and home and club hold out on him and persuade him how dumb he is and how unable, he gets stuck and unhappy himself and becomes hard to live with.



# *that new-old feeling:* who am I really?

These years of passionate collecting—of things, of skills, of facts—come to an end. These years of strong friendships—boys and girls, girls and girls—come to an end. These years of careless, sloppy, noisy, sprawling childhood come to an end.

No bells ring. It doesn't happen on a birthday. The end comes sooner for some children and a little later for others. But gradually, as you live with them you realize they are not really children any more. Boys no longer scorn girls. Girls find boys bearable again. Even when they still stand apart, they let you know that they are aware the other sex is alive . . . and maybe even interesting.

It would probably help if a bell did ring. In some parts of the world there is a rite for the youthful boy or girl. The whole tribe, on a certain day, says: Today you are a man, or a woman. Some churches mark the child's coming into the full fellowship of the church by a special ceremony. But many of our youngsters glide into it . . . and often it is like slipping on ice.

Physical changes go on inside of them; they feel differently about themselves and about other people. We talk a lot to them about how changed they are. Often they go to a different school with a different kind of set-up. But nothing straightforward and clear-cut and dramatic happens. There is no high sign that tells the young people how to act or how to feel or what to think.

Many young people at this time in their growing feel at loose ends. All the looseness makes them swing back to the kinds of concerns they felt when they were much younger:

A rebirth of the old longing for a sense of trust and a sense of being an independent person. But these are young people now, not little babes.

The young child had to put everything on his cuff and show it and act it out. This older-age youngster has grown enough, if the early years of growing were good ones, so that he can feel it out and act it out in his mind.

The uncertainties are there: What am I like? What will I become? What do people expect of me? What are they going to do to me? How much must I fight or can I trust them?

This is a rehash but it is new too. It is new because so much of it goes on inside of the person and it is new because this is not the first fresh wondering. This is a puzzlement that puts together all the treatment the person has had in the 12 or 13 or fewer or more years that have gone before.

## *Feel your way*

You can give a new name to this. Let us say that the person is searching for a sense of identity, the finding of his special self, the looking inward on himself, the seeing what is there.

You will need good footwork and kid gloves here. These young people who look so big can be real babies at times; they have so much going on inside of them that once in awhile they burst their bounds and put on a real show. But this is not new to you either. You have been rolling with the punches since your youngster was born.





You will need patience and confidence. This age, trying to put its finger on itself, can seem to go to extremes at times. Particularly in words. It has such big ideas and such sensitive feelings, such great enthusiasms for what looks good to it at the moment. There can be arguments, clashes, and stormy weather.

But when you have lived with children from the time they were born you have discovered how often they did pull through. They did come through their hitting, spitting, hair-pulling age, just when you thought that would get you down. They did pass out of their tough-talk age, just when you thought you could not stand a minute more of it. They did pull through that wild furious period of such great activity, just when you thought it would wear you down. These young people will do it again.

### *No snap*

It is not easy for them in our world. Our schools do not always help them much. Schools are apt to go on treating them like children;

young men and young women do not like that feeling. We at home sometimes miss the boat too. We worry about them and tend to go on with our old ways of telling and insisting and checking up. Young men and young women do not appreciate that much either. Neither are our neighborhoods very helpful. These people are too young—so we say—for jobs; too big—so we say—for the silly things they do; too inexperienced to be much good for anything.

But even though the cards are stacked against them, there is real health in young people. They can come through, if they get just a little helping hand. It is too hard on them, too much to expect, if we throw the whole burden on them. If we have no feeling inside of us for what these years mean to them. If we blindly go on treating them as children, not knowing the new concern that they are struggling with.

We get the real flare-ups then. If we shut our doors, we shut ourselves off from them. If we close our ears, they have to shout to state their cases. If we tie them down, they have to struggle to make their point.

With a little understanding, they can keep

themselves in hand. It helps, for example, if we can keep our reminders and requests and demands—the kinds of things we perhaps do with little children—to a minimum. It helps, for example, if we can state our reasons and discuss them (and sometimes even change our rules when these young people put up a good case). And it helps, too, if, on the important occasions when we feel we have to, we stand by our decisions and hold firm.

These people want to be treated with respect. They want to know from the way we approach them that they are nearing the time for being real equals. They want to feel our confidence in them. But at the same time they do not want to be left totally on their own, with complete freedom to do whatever they seem to want to.

### *That is the limit*

Sometimes they act as if no limits were what they wanted. Trying to find themselves they overstate their case at times. They use strong words and fierce arguments. They do become upset if their ideas are crossed. But if the “No’s” are not too close together, if they are reasonable, if they are “over and done with” and the argument does not go on and on, these young people really welcome them . . . all their objections to the contrary. It helps them do what they want, to find themselves.

We have to work on all this at home. Schools have to work on it too: On ways of giving adolescents more freedom, more jobs they can test themselves out on, more decisions that are theirs to make for better or worse; more discussions of what can be done and what cannot; more unruffled confident acceptance of the strong feelings of these people; fewer absolute prohibitions but some firm “No’s” when the need for them seems clear-cut and necessary. Given this atmosphere at home and at school and in the community, young people will come through stronger.

### *The helping hand*

As at every age, certain youngsters may need a particular boost. The young person whose family way of life is not like that of most other people is very much on the spot in these years. It is so much harder to find yourself—what you are like and what you are good for—if your religion is very different or your skin color or your national background or your clothes or your family’s income or the neighborhood you live in.

Whenever parents talk or act in a way that lessens discrimination and prejudice, they do a good turn for these youngsters. And their own child will benefit in the long-run, too.

It is harder for such a young person to find himself at this time if he is a person who feels things keenly. That makes him always fight harder, talk louder, use stronger words, react more deeply. Such a person particularly needs adults who will not be thrown for a loss by his strong feelings; adults who will be more easy-going in talking things over and firm-but-not-angry in saying “No,” when they have to.

This whole period can be especially hard on the youngster whose very early life did not let him develop a strong **sense of being an independent person**. These years give him a second turn at bat for the I—I—I of personal worth. Such a youngster may rebel more strongly. He may argue more vigorously. He may insist more definitely. He may want to try more things out that seem venturesome. His willfulness almost invites us to clamp down. Yet **somebody’s** clamping down along the way was the very cause of the over-strenuous effort now.

Such youngsters, like all young people this age, need reasonable limits and firm “No’s” at times. They show us by their behavior that they also have a very special need for the leeway and perspective and confidence that count so much if these young adolescents, all of them, are to grow strong into the next phase of their living.

*those later feelings:*

# I am one with others and I care for others

Once the young person has gained a sense of his identity with other people, he is increasingly sure of himself. Not that he knows once and for all what he is like (we never reach that state, even when we are well along in our years). But the biting urge to find out is now past. His need to use everything to help him know is now passing. His energy and power and his mind and his heart are free for something else.

As a person who has achieved a *sense of identity*, he can take himself more for granted. The logical thing—the psychological thing—is now to go out beyond himself. He wants to gain strength now, not alone, but with others.

He wants to be one with others, in friendship, in ideas, in hopes, in inspiration. It is the search for this that leads people to seek out a marriage that is a partnership of two equals . . . two people sharing, respecting, and facing the world together.

All these fine things can come about, if the person feels sure of himself. Feeling sure, this is what young men and women are trying to find in these later years of adolescence. This is the meaning of these years for them. This is what they have to do, with our help, if they are to continue to grow.

Because they can grow and want to grow. Life is not over at twenty. Nor do the changes inside of us stop. Throughout our whole growing span each of us is constantly moving onward, seeking at each point the satisfactions that will mean the most to us.

Out of the warm sense of "I am one with

others" will come a still more adult feeling: "I want to care for others." This is a true concern for the well-being of something that is of ourselves but not ourselves. This is most clearly shown in human beings wanting to have children and to protect and care for them and to help them in turn to grow. In other words, the parental sense is the ability to create and to nourish and cherish what is created—be they children or anything else we have created.

## *The show starts early*

Young people put on a show of seeming to seek for a sense of intimacy during all the years of adolescence, even in the early years. They put on so good a show that we often speak of them as being "boy-crazy" or "girl-crazy." But during the early years most youngsters hit the note of finding themselves much stronger than they hit the note of joining up with others or of caring for others.

These young people want dates. There is a strong undercurrent of pride: "People will notice us. They will know that I have dates."

They want to go places but so often their loud talk on the way and when they arrive gives away what is the important thing: "Look at me. See what I can do. Don't forget I'm here."

They want to talk together but the conversation is not always a symphony. Listen and



you will hear that only one instrument plays at a time. It sounds much more like first-I-talk-and-then-you-talk: "This is what I think, this is what I hope to do, this is what I believe."

All this is how the ground is broken. This thorough watering and feeding of the sense of identity with others let more adult feelings emerge. These later feelings are generous feelings, social feelings. We need them badly in our world and we do not see them often enough in people.

Every one of us knows adults who like to be with other people but who are really inside of themselves all the time. Their talk is about themselves; they see everything from a personal standpoint. They use people but to make themselves more real.

Every one of us knows adults who marry but who have some personal trick up their sleeve. They want someone to care for them, or someone they can boss around, or someone to mother them or father them. They have not grown yet into the full sharing feeling of "I join with others" or into the real parent sense of "I care for others."

Every one of us knows adults, too, whose only idea is "What is in it for me?" or "How will this touch me?" It is hard for them to be their brother's keeper, to care deeply about other people, especially people they do not know and cannot see. It is even hard for them to fit into what the others right around them want: Their own children, wife or husband, neighbor, coworker.

*Wanted: peace and good living for all*

Our people are strong in promoting independence: The sense of I—I—I. We are good at building initiative: The clean-cut feeling of some plans and ideas. We think a sense of industry is good; we like to see children and adults who feel important and know that they-can-do. These ideas tie into our ideas of political freedom.

But today, in addition to all of these, America and the world need people who have found these later feelings, too: The sense of

joining with others and of caring for others, the sense of belonging to a community, a state, a nation, the world. This is one world, and this is one country too. One town. One neighborhood. One family.

No one can live alone. We are each part of the other. Disease spreads; ideas spread; war spreads; and so do peace and happiness and good living. The big question we all face in this Twentieth Century is how we ourselves can join up with others and care for others, and how we can help our children do it, too. We need this for our self-preservation, and our

children need it to reach the fullest satisfactions they can get as human beings.

For us to help children grow up, for us to help them find themselves, for us to help them achieve success, we must ourselves keep growing. We must feel sure enough inside of ourselves—trusting enough—so that we can feel glad about helping *all* children get what they need.

Out of our good feelings can come children with healthy personalities. And out of such children can come a world of peace and good living for all.

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